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THE PRICE OF PARTY GOVERNMENT

by Edna Lonigan

American voters, deep in their own affairs, are hoping that somebody will revitalize one or both parties before the crucial elections of 1950. But are we dealing only with a weakness of the party leadership? Is the political party merely an association of indifferent voters who wait for their leaders to make a decision and then put a piece of paper in a ballot box, approving or disapproving their choice?

In recent years Americans have been conditioned to look with contempt on political parties. "Muckraking" intellectuals certainly made capital, at the turn of the century, out of the symptoms of coming danger that appeared first in municipal politics. But the critics of boss rule had no real understanding of the nature of political power, and no interest in the even more serious symptoms of popular confusion appearing in Europe. They complained of a smelly breeze when a hurricane was rising. Many voters even prided themselves on being "independents", meaning that they would accept no collective responsibility for the political life of the nation.

The truth seems to be that we have over-emphasized the ballot box. We have confused the symbol of the vote with the substance of political power. Of course the ballot never was the source of political power and now the plebiscite has actually become the mainstay of dictatorships. We must look deeper to see what is the essential factor in keeping political power out of the hands of tyrants.

To find the answer we must consider the relation of political power to government. "Government" is an instrument without intrinsic purpose. It has the capacity to be helpful or injurious, but not to direct itself. Government is a sword without an arm, a ship without a pilot. Someone must give this instrument purpose.

The purpose of government is supplied by political leadership. This leadership may be, for instance, that of a military chieftain or a landed aristocracy, or the representatives of the people as a whole. But, as Mosca has so clearly shown, the choice will be determined, not by what is "best" for the nation, but by what is strongest competitively in the technical task of organizing political power.

Popular sovereignty, or government by the people, is possible only when the plain citizens, without office, have more political vitality than the paid servants of government.

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II

Felix Morley, in his recent book on The Power in the People, has given us important insight into the rise of the private associations of citizens which we call the two-party system.

The system of citizen parties arose out of the bitter struggle between the English people and the Stuart family, who firmly believed in the "divine right" of arbitrary government. Charles I, by controlling judges and levying his own taxes, tried to remake the nation in the mold of his personal will. Through their elected representatives the English people resisted royal pressure, raised their own army, and eventually took the king's life -- to establish the principle that Britons would not be serfs of government.

When James II tried to repeat his father's mistakes, the people forced him into exile. They also set up a body of restrictions on their rulers, brilliantly designed to keep any king from ever again imposing his personal will on the nation. This Bill of Rights prevented the ruler from arresting any citizens without a warrant, and from keeping them in jail without a trial. The king could not levy taxes, but had to call Parliament to do it. Thus the power of government was placed in the hands of the people and political associations were organized to direct this power and to keep it in and for the people.

After fifty years of struggle, the English-speaking people had won the right to remain individually secure in person and property; and to publish their opinions, regardless of whether they were agreeable to the rulers. This is the meaning of the Bill of Rights, the all-important protection, if the people are to control government.

As Mr. Morley points out, the opposition organized its supporters first. Then the governing group was obliged to organize its supporters to stay in power. The two-party system was born. The English nation could now develop as private citizens wished, instead of having to follow the lines laid down for it by the government planners, as the nations on the Continent did.

True representative government, the political system under which control rests in the citizens, can exist only where the powers of government, to tax and to punish, are severely limited, and people who have no office can combine to oppose the government.

III

The American colonists had to oppose not only the king, as their English forebears had done, but also the majority in the English Parliament, which supported George III. The Americans carried the fight

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for freedom a stage further than the English. When the rebellion was over, the Constitutional Convention and the Bill of Rights put more restraints on government here than the English people had established. Their objective was to prevent not merely the tyranny of a king, but any possible dictatorship, including that of the majority.

Because those who were in government office had no power to curb the opposition, Americans promptly divided without formal machinery or laws, into two private political associations or parties. For 150 years the American people solved their political problems by the simple device of two parties, polarized over the issue of enlarging or curbing centralized governmental power.

After the voters had spoken, the heads of government obeyed. If the party in office was defeated, its officials stepped down and turned over all government authority to their opponents. The transition was orderly, peaceful and matter of course. If the opposition was defeated, its members promptly acquiesced in the verdict, and the people co-operated gladly after Election Day with officials whom many had bitterly denounced the day before.

The whole world envied this political miracle, whereby a nation resolved its bitterest differences in sharp debate, and then in peaceful balloting. Much of our economic prosperity is the fruit of this mature political behavior.

It ought to be obvious that this system did not work because there was any magic in ballots as such. It worked because the Constitution and the Bill of Rights imposed restrictions on the power of government strong enough to prevent anyone from successfully using the police power to bribe, coerce, or silence the opposition.

It has become the fashion to denounce parties and party leaders because they are private associations, without a place in government. Senator Lodge even proposes that we let the Government finance -- and manage -- our parties! But it is the great achievement of the two-party system that it represents the private citizens, the people who under limited government do not need inherited status, or office or military powers, in order to keep political control of their government. Popular sovereignty was achieved by the Bill of Rights. It is maintained by the two-party system.

IV

The attack on popular sovereignty today comes not through force but through one-party rule, devised in its modern form by Napoleon III and perfected by Lenin.

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In one-party rule popular sovereignty is dead. Sovereignty has been usurped by the head man and the officer class who help him rule. The masses are given bread and circuses to keep them quiet, but they have no political power. One-party rule is the return to oligarchy.

Today, in the United States, we have all the elements of one-party rule, the would-be leaders, the ambitious elite and the docile masses. We have one-party factions not only in Washington but in our states. These factions play the Communist game without even realizing what they are doing. These self-styled "liberals" will usurp all governmental power unless and until the millions of voters who prefer liberty, with all its pains, see clearly the task before them. We must put restraints on government-by-seduction as effective as those that the founding fathers put on government-by-force.

It is difficult for Americans to realize that we are now face to face with arbitrary use of governmental power great enough to nullify the Bill of Rights. The political weapon of our time is illusion. Under the veil of illusion those who seek arbitrary power today do not use jails and soldiers. They use money and words.

When the Secretary of the Treasury can order a bank to confiscate money from the account of Vivian Kellems, where no crime has been committed or even charged, and where no court has ruled on the question of rights, we have seizure of property by government fiat, as under the Stuarts. The first condition of popular sovereignty is that we must be secure against a penalty if we oppose the government by legal means.

When the government can fill the papers with deceptive accounts of its achievements, and blot out the story of individual accomplishments, we have what in effect is censorship of the press.

We can no longer enjoy old-fashioned political contests between two private associations, both using the weapon of argument. We face a sterner contest between the people and an oligarchy wielding the full powers of government. It is the decisive round in the same struggle that the English waged against the Stuarts, that the early Americans waged against George III and his subservient Parliament. The earlier rounds were won because among the people there were many who stood up and fought on principle. Such men are our only defense today.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VI, No. 41

By Frank C. Hanighen October 12, 1949

DISMANTLING: John J. McCloy, High Commissioner in Germany, last week end came out strongly on the side of those who oppose dismantling German industry, although he drew some of the teeth from his statement a day later. McCloy is a sadder and wiser man now after some months in his new post. Last spring, after his appointment, we heard him rather lightly minimize the dismantling problem. Not only has he been studying the matter on the spot, but he must presently be aware of its implications in the psychological cold war. On October 8, the new Communist Government in Eastern Germany called for a halt to dismantling in all of Germany. Finally, as a shrewd business man, McCloy may well perceive the real reason for the British desire to dismantle German industry. Colonel Patrick Miller, formerly consultant to General Robertson of the British military government in Berlin puts his finger on the cause of the British policy (his remarks were reprinted in the Congressional Record of September 29 by Congresswoman St. George): "Germany can produce cheaper today than Great Britain. The reason for this is not private economy, but the Welfare State of the Labor Government whose only endeavor it is to increase wages and to extend off-work hours. This policy can only lead to one thing, that British goods are no longer competitive in world markets.

"If the Labor Government dismantles in Germany", says Colonel Miller, "this is done in the first place in order to suppress German competition. However, this policy is not adhered to for the benefit of British enterprises, it is rather supposed to help the Government itself. For if they succeed in eliminating serious competition they will be able to keep up the idea of a Welfare State paying high wages and reducing the hours of work eternally. The Government only knows too well that their socialized industries will never be able to stand genuine competition. However, Labor is prepared to sacrifice all our hope for peace to their doctrinaire philosophy before they would give private enterprise in Britain a chance, or before they would free the German industry for the benefit of European recovery and the prosperity of the Continent. The price for such a short-sighted policy will either be war, the forward move of the Iron Curtain to the banks of the Rhine, or the rising of a new and fatal German Fuehrer, brought to light by an uncontrollable emotional neo-Fascism."

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STEEL STRIKE: The papers have been so busy explaining what the steel strike is about that few have advanced any suggestion as to how it might be compromised. This is pardonable, since the issues are rather complicated. We have, however, discovered one published proposal which seems persuasive. It appears in the current number of a newsletter entitled Interpreting the Labor News, gotten out weekly by Herman and Conway Associates (400 Madison Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.), which we have read with interest and respect for the past year. The publication points out that (1) face-saving for the union is essential; but (2) preservation of the substance of Steel's position is also essential. Steel clearly feels that no settlement should open the door to progressive increase of the size of welfare and pension funds. The real objection of the company -- which as usual is not well explained to the public -- is that noncontributory funds, no matter how modestly they start, snowball at a virtually geometrical rate.

Hence, Messrs. Herman and Conway say the problem is how to give Murray a "ten-cent package" without abandoning the essence of the principle upon which U. S. Steel took its stand; and they remind us that the company did offer the amount of the Fact Finding Board's "package". That could be the basis, says the newsletter, of a settlement now on a "noncontributory" basis with the following provisos:

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"1. That future increases in welfare or pension plan funds will be either (a) up to, say, an additional five cents entirely a worker contribution and thereafter fifty-fifty on the part of the company and the workers, or (b) as a maximum concession that, from this time on, any increase in those funds shall be on the basis of equal contributions. 2. That this agreement shall be in writing and shall be incorporated as part of the settlement contract. 3. That in the negotiation of any future contracts this principle shall be removed from the area of bargaining except by mutual consent." This saves Mr. Murray's face, and prevents what the company fears -- a repetition of the miners' pension and welfare snowball. The newsletter concludes: "For both sides, it seems infinitely better than a long-drawn out strike with an almost certain eventual settlement imposed by the government."

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CROMMELIN: We have more than a sneaking sympathy for Navy Captain Crommelin despite disagreement with his stand in the present unification controversy. In our opinion Secretary of Defense Johnson is on sound ground in his efforts to cut down the appropriations of a Navy which has no other navy to fight. Johnson's evident desire to subordinate the Navy to the realities of modern warfare and the attempt of Secretary of the Navy Matthews to collaborate with his chief deserve praise. Nevertheless, the independent, fearless spirit of Crommelin is a rare spectacle in this timorously bureaucratic capital and rightly inspires admiration for the man, and for his Service.

One remark often heard during the past week was, "only a Navy man would have the courage to do what Crommelin did. There is in the Navy a much better esprit de corps, a higher standard of character than in the other services. During the last war, it resisted with considerable success the Communist effort to infiltrate its ranks. It was a Navy man, Admiral Standley, who as Ambassador in Moscow made the Kremlin knuckle under in a celebrated episode; and who was pulled back to Washington for his pains. While the Navy has not always been insensitive to political pressure, it has a much better record in this respect than the Army. When the Pearl Harbor disaster was investigated by Congress, it was not the Army which distinguished itself on the witness stand. It was a Navy captain who risked and lost his career by revealing the facts about the "East Wind" message (which should have alerted our forces) while Army officers hemmed and hawed before Democratic politicians. Crommelin today has thrown away his career and military future in order to make public a viewpoint in which he sincerely believes. If the Air Corps wins it could do with a little of the Crommelin spirit.

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HISS TRIAL: Alger Hiss has applied for a change of venue for his next trial, to start November 1. Mr. Hiss fears that New York has heard too much, and believes that Vermont knows less of the first trial and will have formed fewer prejudices if the second is held there. We note that Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in her column (October 8) has approved the Hiss proposal, as usual on the most "liberal" of grounds. But the New York World Telegram perceives more in this matter than a change of scenery and air. On October 6, that paper says: "The judge of the federal district which includes Vermont most probably will be Governor Ernest W. Gibson of that state. Governor Gibson recently was appointed to the bench by President Truman. The appointment has not yet been confirmed by the Senate but appears assured.

"We think it is too much to ask of any judge that one of his first jobs on the bench be the Hiss trial. We think it is not fair to the public to place the trust of absolute, impartial justice in this complicated case in the hands of an inexperienced judge, however great his potential ability. Governor Gibson has, in our

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opinion, demonstrated that he may not be aware of the prominence of Communism in this country. At an American Legion convention last July, he attacked a Legion list of 'undesirable' speakers. At the convention, the Governor defended Dr. Marshall E. Dimock, once one of his legislative aids and a sponsor of the recent pro-Soviet 'peace' conference in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Perhaps this is a clew to why Mr. Hiss likes Vermont. If Mr. Hiss is successful in moving his trial to Vermont, we suggest Governor Gibson step aside to permit the most able and experienced federal judge available to be called in to preside."

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OLDS: The fight between the White House and Congress over the confirmation of Leland Olds as Federal Power Commissioner is one of those Washington affairs in which scare words conceal the real conflict. The "liberals" claim that it is not reasonable to revive the fact that Olds many years ago wrote for Communist publications; that Olds' decisions in recent years have been fair to business; and that Big Business is behind the opposition to him. Actually, these "liberals" want Olds because he subscribes to a collectivist, Big Government philosophy. The argument that Big Business opposes Olds is impaired by the fact that the National Coal Association, operators and owners of coal mines, has come out in favor of Olds. Coal and natural gas interests are understandably not fond of each other.

Meanwhile conservatives attacked Olds for his writings of many years ago. But, oddly enough, they were led in the Senate fight by Fair Deal Senator Lyndon Johnson of Texas. Actually, Johnson merely serves as the "front man" for Fair Dealer Sam Rayburn, Speaker of the House. It is an open secret in the Capital that Rayburn has directed and stage-managed the whole drive against Olds. Rayburn, like Johnson, is from Texas; but few would accuse the Speaker of being the pawn of natural gas corporations. So, the whole affair boils down to this: one wing of the Fair Deal has collided with another wing which is sometimes called the "Texas gang" (incidentally no little power in the Democratic phalanx on the Hill). The Texans felt that their state interests were endangered by the Olds appointment. But, to stop Olds, the Texas Fair Dealers needed conservative votes. Hence, the muckraking of Mr. Olds' literary efforts of a score of years ago. To put it in another way, Texas New Dealers turned "States' Righters" for the nonce, and dragged "red herrings" across the path of a President who wants bigger and better Big Government and chooses to place the blame on Big Business.

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MOSCOW PROPAGANDA: Some of the comical fantasia which issue from Mr. Truman's lips and pass for serious political utterances should make us humble about satirizing the preposterous broadcasts from Soviet Russia. However, on October 6, the Kremlin microphone boys astonished even our jaded senses. It is natural that Moscow should seek new opprobrious phrases for the arch-heretic, Marshal Tito. But we had never expected to read the charge that Tito has become the soulmate of Franco. The Madrid radio has been ironically hailing the exploits of this Communist leader of Yugoslavia, which provoked Moscow radio to say: "Franco and Tito are united by links which go far back. Now the Franco press has resumed its praise of the Belgrade deserter of the democratic camp. It praises his National Communists, in which it perceives a resemblance to Franco's national syndicalism. There is nothing strange in this because they are both direct descendants of Hitler's National Socialism. . . . These are a few aspects of the affectionate friendship and mutual understanding between the Prado Caudillo and the Duce of Belgrade. It is to be presumed that as a result of the Belgrade trial this friendship will grow and be proclaimed quite openly."

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Book Events

Stalin: A Political Biography, by Isaac Deutscher. New York and London: Oxford University Press. $5.00. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

Mr. Deutscher's life of the best known and least understood political figure of our age differs from those by M. Souvarine and the late Comrade Trotsky chiefly by its greater parade of impartiality and objective scholarship. For this and other reasons it has been received with much admiration and praise by reviewers, both English and American; but there are evidently some quarters in which Mr. Deutscher has not succeeded in clearing himself of all suspicion of propagandistic purposes. It has been asserted, for example, by an anti-Stalinist critic of Russian origin that Mr. Deutscher has attempted to put the best possible face upon Stalin's conduct and motives, admitting only those damaging and unfavorable facts that are already well known to British and American readers, and ignoring, suppressing or distorting others in a manner that only specialists in the literature of the Russian Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary epochs would be likely to detect. This is hardly a question upon which a reviewer unacquainted with the language and the whole documentation is justified in taking sides; yet the accusation is given some color by Mr. Deutscher's loose and rather reckless generalizations from well-established historical facts, especially the analogies he is fond of drawing from the English and French revolutions.

But if, as has been alleged by his critic, Mr. Deutscher's intention has been to present a portrait of Stalin that would be comforting to Western fellow travellers and reassuring to those who cling to the hope of some modus vivendi with the Kremlin, it cannot be said he has succeeded. What he actually gives us is not very different after all from the portrait by Souvarine. Mr. Deutscher's Stalin is compounded in fairly even parts of the traditional Oriental despot, whose outline has been preserved for us by Herodotus and others, of the traditional Tammany politician, of the traditional revolutionary upstart, of the ideological fanatic, and of the madman obsessed with the fantasy of power. It sums up of course to a rather frightening personality, but one that is likely to be admired only by those who share the fantasy. There are to be sure moments when the sharers appear to include the biographer, and if we may trust him, they include the great mass of the contemporary Russian people. Mr. Deutscher, like most journalists, makes a great deal of Stalin's iron nerve, and icy self-composure in the face of danger and crisis, but at the basis of his ruthlessness is evidently a titanic fear. Thus Mr. Deutscher's explanation of the great purges is that the fantastic accusations of world-wide treasons within the Party were based not upon anything that had actually happened but upon Stalin's prevision of what the defeated factions of Right and Left might do in the event of a Russian military defeat. We are left to infer that Stalin at the cost of a tremendous terror and some tens of thousand Communist lives forestalled the possibility of another treaty of Brest-Litovsk when the Germans reached the gates of Moscow in the early winter of 1941. And Mr. Deutscher tells us that, though neither the Nazis nor the world knew of it, a great conspiracy to destroy Stalin did exist within the Red Army and the lower strata of the Party.

Thus the moral of Mr. Deutscher's book, as far as it may be considered an apologia for Stalin, is that grandeur of the hero's ends has in some wise justified the horror of his means. The book concludes appropriately with a comparison of Hitler, as the uncreative type of tyrant, and Stalin, whose historical role, it seems, incorporates those of Cromwell, Robespierre and Napoleon, as the creative type. And so we may recall the apothegm of Lord Acton concerning historians who have defended the methods of older and milder revolutionary terrorists: "After the strong man with the dagger comes the sophist with the sponge."

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